



Priory Woods School and Arts College

Forest School Handbook



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Section 1

Principles of Forest School



Principles of Forest School

The Forest School ethos has six principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School Community in 2011. For more information on what Forest School is and how guiding principles were agreed see www.forestschoollassociation.org

The six guiding principles of Forest School are given below. Criteria for good practice relating to each are listed directly underneath.

1: Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/manager, the Forest School practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

3: Forest School aims to promote holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a risk-benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

5: Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- There is a high ratio of practitioners/adults to learners
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the role and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees herself, therefore, as a learner too.

6: Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

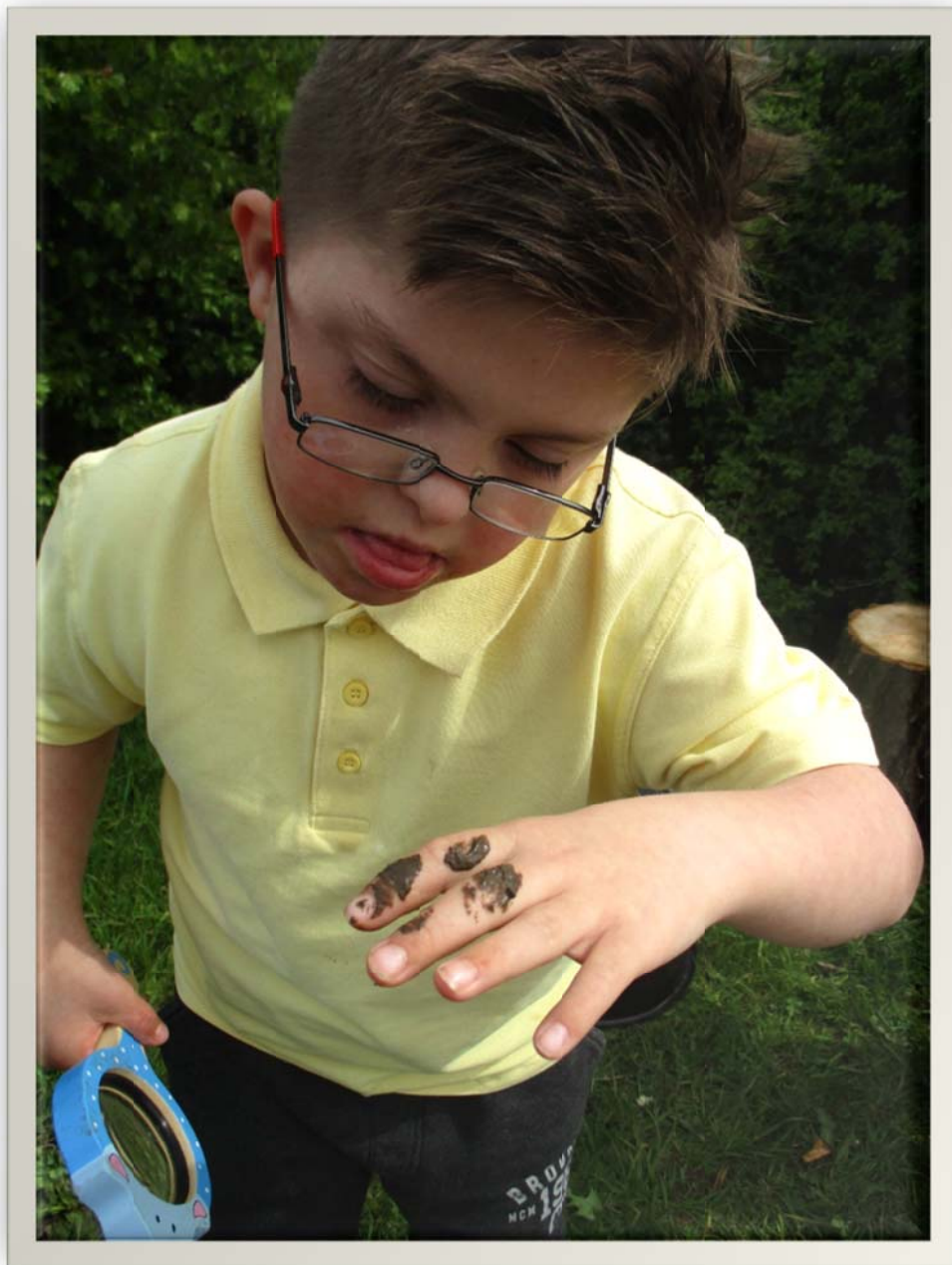
- The practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice is an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.

- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.

*6 principles taken from the Forest School Association

Section 2

Priory Woods Forest School Policy





PRIORY WOODS SCHOOL AND ARTS COLLEGE FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

"Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults, regular opportunities to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with tree." (1)

Introduction

The Forest School approach is a unique method of outdoor education that allows children to develop confidence, independence, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of the natural environment. It focuses on the process of learning rather than the outcomes and the longer a programme runs the more beneficial it will be.

Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round and in all weathers. The sessions will be held in the school's own Forest School area or in local woodland sites including Flats Lane Country Park and Stuart Park. The repeated visits to the site allows for the development of confidence as well as the consolidation and transfer of new skills learned. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves.

All sessions will allow time for social interaction, including opportunities for teamwork, individual and group reviews, informal Play and socialising. Another core theme is increasing environmental awareness and knowledge, with obvious links to sustainability and global citizenship.

Objectives

- To ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to benefit from Forest School activities.
- To provide children with experiences that encourages an appreciation, awareness and knowledge of the natural environment.
- To learn to respect and care for their own local environment.
- To abide by rules and set standards of behaviour, to work cooperatively in groups and to respect each other.
- Develop children's self-esteem and self-confidence through the setting of small achievable tasks.
- To give staff a chance to observe students in a different setting.
- To offer an opportunity to become fitter and healthier.
- For participants to learn to recognise and assess risks for themselves.
- To ensure that all visits are safe, purposeful and appropriate to meet the educational needs of pupils taking part.
- To enable the School to identify appropriate functions, responsibilities, training, support and monitoring for governors, staff, volunteers, pupils and providers involved in Forest School sessions.
- To enable compliance with LEA 'Safety Guidelines for Educational Visits and Adventure Activities' which incorporate guidelines published by the DfES in 1998 entitled 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits'.
- Opportunities for staff to learn new skills, and enjoy the benefits of FS too!

Risk assessments, Good Practice and Procedures, Forest School activities, rules for tools and fire etc. can all be found within the Forest School guidebook which contains everything you need to know about our Forest School sessions. A laminated Forest School Handbook is taken into the woodland on each visit, this contains vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Equality and Diversity

At Priory Woods we will attempt to include all students in all activities as much as their special needs allow and no form of discrimination will take place. Reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc. Priory Woods has an Inclusion, Special Educational Needs Policy and an Equality and Diversity Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Forest School Leader: will have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification and an outdoor and paediatric first aid qualification.
- Class Teachers - will run sessions following the procedures set out in the hand book.
- Teaching Assistants - will support the delivery of the sessions

Staff running the sessions have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs.
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
- Administration of first aid and checking first aid kit.
- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
- Organising emergency procedures.
- Ensure students are suitably clothed for sessions.

Staff/ students / volunteers: will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within the Forest School area and monitor levels of safety at all times.

At least one member of staff will have an up to date certificate in first aid whenever the sessions include lighting fires or using tools. Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures attached. A first aid kit is taken on all visits. In the case of an accident requiring further assistance, an emergency contact form is carried with a mobile phone. The form contains emergency contact numbers and directions for emergency services. The school will normally contact the parents.

Everyone involved in Forest School is fully briefed on health and safety, risk assessment of sites and activities. Staff are made aware of the relevant school policies and procedures and ensure that they adhere to the guidance contained in them.

Parents are responsible to send children with suitable clothing for Forest School sessions.

Children are expected to behave sensibly while taking part in Forest School activities following the code of conduct set out in the handbook.

Health and safety

Priory Woods School recognises its 'Duty of Care' and statutory responsibilities for the 'Health, Safety and Welfare' of participants, staff, volunteers, external providers and members of the public in connection with Forest School sessions.

In order to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards in this regard the school has adopted the following guidelines issued by the DfES:

Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits 1998

Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits 2002

Standards for Adventure 2002

A Handbook for Group Leaders 2002

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Race Relations Acts 1976 & 2000

Sex Discrimination Act 1986

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Children Act 2004

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them.

- Children will be reminded of rules and safe play.
- Ratios within the woodland area will be determined by the age and ability of the students in the session.
- Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment.
- Dynamic risk assessments will be in place to cover other eventualities.
- The Forest School session leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme.
- All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions.
- An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School session leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice.
- The school has a Health and Safety Policy and a Safeguarding Children Policy to enhance aspects of health and safety

Risk Assessments will include:

- The site of the Forest School
- Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives)
- Activity Risk Assessments including lighting fires, carrying sticks, collecting natural materials.

First Aid

The Forest School Leader has an enhanced first aid certificate to specifically cover outdoors. There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within school. A list of student's contact details should be carried alongside the first aid kit. Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms. Emergency procedures are within the Forest School Sessions handbook which is taken into the woodland each session. Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, emergency medication etc. are taken into woodland.

Use of Tools

- Children and adults will be trained in the safe use of each tool before they use it.
- Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory.
- Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children.
- They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used.
- Tool use will be on a ratio of one to one.
- Any accident or near miss should be recorded and evaluated.

Fires

A trained member of staff must always be present when a fire is lit and must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire. Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.

- Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log.
- Step over and sit down on the log seat.
- Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
- Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).

Clothing

- Suitable clothing and appropriate footwear must be worn at all times; Long sleeves and long trousers to protect from ticks, scratches, nettles etc. no open shoes or sandals).
- Clothing should be weather and season appropriate. The general rule is to wear lots of layers.
- Sun hat and sun protection cream should be worn in the summer

Dealing with Strangers, Members of the Public and Dogs

- Children are informed never to approach anyone or any animal in the woodland setting.
- Any incidents are recorded in the Emergency Procedures Record.

Toileting

- Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before leaving school.
- Flats Lane Woodland Park has public toilets that can be used with supervision if needed.
- Hand washing facilities, including anti-bacterial gel will be available on site

Food and Drink

Forest School activities often include eating and drinking

Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating.

- Hands will be washed using hand gel before food or snacks are consumed.
- All staff and volunteers are fully informed about individual children's dietary needs. Children receive only food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents' wishes.
- During some session children will be offered hot chocolate during the day (especially during winter months)
- Children will be taught reasons why berries or fruit may not be eaten during Forest Schools activities.
- They will be reassured that fruit from woodland can be safe to eat, but can equally be dangerous and adult supervision is required to ensure correct berries are eaten.

Equipment and Resources

- Planned activities and appropriate resources will be provided so that a balance of familiar equipment and resources and new exciting challenges is offered.
- Children will be taught how to use equipment safely, risk assess their use and supervise children when using tools.
- Natural and recycled materials which are in good condition and safe for the children to use will be provided
- All resources and equipment will be checked regularly and repaired and cleaned, or replaced if unsafe.

Lost Child Procedures

- In the event of a child becoming lost while at Forest School, procedures will be followed which ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child.
- In the event that a child is lost, we will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents will be notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care will be maintained to other children while procedures are followed.
- A quick search of surrounding areas will take place. While the initial search is made, the session leader will make enquiries of all adults to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.)
- The session leader will then telephone the police and report the situation and follow their advice. The parent or carer will be contacted. Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed.
- The activities for the remaining children will continue as normal and staff not involved in the search will give the children proper attention. Any incidents are recorded in the Emergency Procedures Record.

Risk Assessment Procedure

The Forest School session leader is responsible for everyone's safety therefore the following procedures are in place for when children are off site:

- Look for hazards.
- Decide who may be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks on site and decide whether existing controls are adequate.
- Evaluate and record amendments to current risk assessments
- Review assessments yearly (or if circumstances change) and revise

Accident and Emergency Procedure

All staff, volunteers and participants will be briefed on what to do in case of an emergency. A whistle will be blown as a signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff, be silent and wait for instructions. The Forest School Session Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will attend to any casualties, giving First Aid as necessary. An Accident Form will be completed later at the School Office.

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by First Aid on-site and requires medical assistance:

- In serious cases, the Emergency Services should be contacted (see below) using the Emergency Phone carried by the Forest School Leader, then the school will be notified.
- The School Office will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- One member of staff from school will meet the ambulance at the School entrance or the Woodland entrance and direct the crew to the incident.
- If the injured party is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the injured party's emergency contact will be updated about the situation by a member of the School office staff.
- In minor cases, the Forest School Session Leader will arrange to contact the injured party's emergency contact so that they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor or home, as appropriate.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Ambulance/Fire Brigade: 999

School Office: 0121 770540

Site Management

Each activity carried out in the outdoors will have an immediate impact on the environment; some positive and some not so. We aim to keep this impact to a minimum. One of the principles of Forest Schools is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children will be taught respect and responsibility for the world around them.

The site within the school grounds is still under development and the students will be involved in planting tree, laying paths, removing rubbish etc. This should help them to take more responsibility in looking after the site. This will be monitored as the area develops. The Forest School Leader (FLS) will complete regular inspections of the site for signs of impact and evaluate actions. Activities will be assessed for their impact on the environment and measures taken to keep their impact to a minimum.

Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas of the woodland. As trees start to grow branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries, they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored in the log store and used as fire wood. During the winter months large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them.

Reducing Waste and Recycling

Forest School activities will reflect best environmental practice in order to control and reduce our direct impacts on the environment. Children will be taught the importance of recycling and reducing waste and be encouraged to care for the environment for others. All litter and debris taken into the site will be removed and regular litter picks will be arranged to remove other refuse which is in the area.

Where possible recycled, reclaimed or natural and sustainable resources will be used in our woodland. The site will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. Non-native or invasive species may be removed or managed to eliminate them taking over.

Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or before should any incidents arise or laws and policies change.

Section 3

Code of Conduct



Our Forest School Code of Conduct

Entering the Forest

We will enter the Forest respectfully and know that when at Forest School specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.

Boundaries

Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. When students are required to return to 'camp' a signal will be given which they are familiar with through classroom games that are practised regularly. (Generic site risk assessment)

Lighting a fire

When lighting a fire the Forest School Session leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A fire will only be lit when there is a purpose to lighting it e.g. cooking, keeping warm, heating water etc. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square and surrounded by a circle of seating (the fire circle). (Fire risk assessments)

At the Fire Circle

An open fire will be lit within a fire square. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. No one is allowed to run past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit. (Fire risk assessments)

Using Tools

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. (See tool use guides and risk assessments).

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living tress.

Picking up and playing with stones

Stones may be picked up and transported but children need to be reminded that they are not to be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

Digging

Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using lolly pop sticks, fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made. Care must be taken not to poke sticks into holes already visible in case it is an insect home.

Collecting wood

Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses - matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

Eating and Drinking

Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Forest, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session (e.g. blackberry picking). Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water or hygiene gel to clean their hands before consumption.

Rope and String

Rope and string are very useful in a Forest School session. Children will be taught to tie knots and to use the rope to help transport heavy objects. We do not allow children to wrap the rope around each other.

Carrying and Transporting Materials

Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

Tree Climbing

An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Forest School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration.

Country Code

Below are 6 of the key country side code points.

These are the ones you should always remember, but you should really know them all and in full.

- Be safe
- Plan ahead and follow any signs :- Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go (for example, your rights to go onto some areas of open land may be restricted while work is carried out, for safety reasons or during breeding seasons). Follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.
- Leave gates and property as you find them: - Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home: - We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants, or trees.
- Keep dogs under close control: - The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or other people.
- Consider other people: - Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone - at home, at work and at leisure.

(http://www.scouthelp.co.uk/Key_Points)

Section 4

Safety Procedures

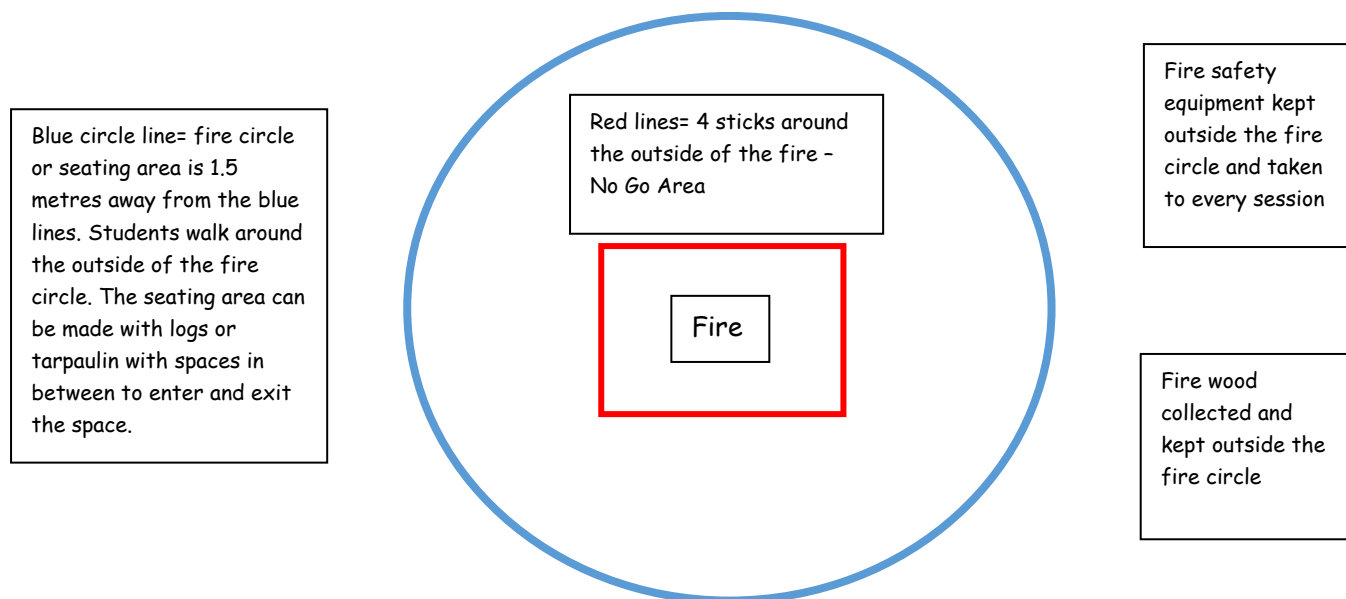


Fire Safety

Fires and the use of Kelly Kettles are a valuable part of Forest School. If cooking, food hygiene precautions must be adhered to. The Forest School programme aims to ensure that all children and adults taking part in sessions including fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location.

- Only previously agreed areas will be used for campfires.
- Kelly Kettles are only used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away.
- The area should be clear from overhanging branches
- The area should be clear of any tripping hazards.
- Wind direction should be taken into account and seating should be arranged out of the smoke.



Positioning of students and adults

- The fire will be surrounded by a boundary of thick sticks to create a 'no entry' zone (the red Square).
- Seating is positioned about 1.5 metre from the fire pit. (the blue circle).
- When the fire is lit, students are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- When seated Students must sit with legs drawn in and not outstretched and they must remain seated unless given permission to move by an adult.

- When walking about the area everyone must walk outside the seating unless given permission to enter the circle by the session leader.
- Students will be taught to change seats by standing, moving behind the log they were sitting on and walking around the outside of the area.
- No one is permitted to throw anything into the fire.
- Seating in the line of the smoke should be avoided.

Safety and Responsibility

- The session leader will make the decision about the ability and attitude of students with regards to who is able to light a fire.
- Fires are lit using a fire steel.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to accelerate the lighting of the fire.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions include students adding wood fuel to the fire, this must be done with close 1-1 supervision.
- Sticks/wood must be placed not thrown onto the fire

Lighting a fire

When lighting a fire the Forest School Session leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A fire will only be lit when there is a purpose to lighting it e.g. cooking, keeping warm, heating water etc. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square and surrounded by a circle of seating (the fire circle). (Fire risk assessments)

At the Fire Circle

An open fire will be lit within a fire square. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. No one is allowed to run past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.
(Fire risk assessments)

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- Forest School Leaders should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Leaving the fire site safe

Any site where a fire has been lit should be left safe, clean and tidy. Once the fire is extinguished any pieces of food or foil should be picked out of the fire and taken back to school with any other rubbish. Spread the ashes over a wide area. If it is a permanent fire site any wood that was collected but not burned should be stacked near the fire for next use.

Hand Tool Safety

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader(s) and will be inspected before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased. This will be achieved by following these guidelines:

- Staff to child ratio varies from tool to tool (check individual tool procedure sheets)
- Tools will be kept in the Forest School tool area and only removed by the Forest School staff or volunteers.
- A 'Tool Talk' should be given every time a new tool is used.
- Penknives must be opened and closed by Forest School staff, TAs or volunteers.
- Running with tools is prohibited.
- Pointing with tools is prohibited.
- Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.
- Wood being sawn must be supported on a saw horse or a natural sawing break - hands must be kept away from the blade.
- All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session
- Volunteer helpers must receive basic training on the use of individual hand tools before being allowed to use them with children.

Care of Tools

It is vital to keep tools in good working order to prolong their life.
After use tools should be;

- Checked for damage or worn parts.
- Cleaned with a cloth or wire brush by an adult.
- Dried if they get wet to avoid corrosion.

Tools used for cutting may need sharpening periodically and blades will benefit from regular oiling.

Tools should be stored carefully with any protective covers replaced at all times when not in use.


Tool Talk Example - Knife


- This is a fixed blade knife.
- This is the handle.
- This is the cover.
- I take the cover off like this.
- This is the blade.
- This is the cutting edge.
- When I have finished with the knife I put the cover back on like this.
- I stand with the knife like this.
- I walk with the knife like this.
- I pass the knife like this.
- When I use the knife I use it two arms and a tools length away from anyone except my partner like this.
- I use the knife to cut cord and to whittle.
- I have bare hands on the tool.
- I have a glove on my helper hand.
- When I am not using the knife I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing inwards.
- When I have finished with the knife I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided.


Section 5


Hand Tool Procedures




Tool	Peeler 
Purpose	Used for peeling the bark off sticks and branches, suitable for young children to use instead of a knife.
Safety Equipment or Design Feature	The handle is designed for easier and safer grip, for left or right handed use.
PPE	
Adult : Student ratio	1 : 4
Transporting	Always hold by the handle. Pass with handle pointing towards the other person.
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance of others.
Body Stance	Sit or kneel in a comfortable position.
Method of Use	Use the peeler to strip the bark off the stick always working away from the body. The hand holding the stick should always be behind the peeler. Hold the stick firmly and push the peeler down the stick away from the body taking care if there are knots in the wood.
Checking	Check blade is intact, not damaged and not blunt. Check there is no damage to the handle.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use. Dry blade if wet.
Maintenance	Little needed, can oil the blade to prevent corrosion
Storage	When not in use place flat on the ground on designated tool tarpaulin where it can be seen. Store in a tool bag/pouch away from reach of children

Tool	Fixed blade Knife 
Purpose	A knife that has a fixed blade that does not fold or slide and ore stored in a protective sheath. The knives have a long carbon steel blade extending into the handle to give maximum strength
Safety Equipment or Design Feature	The handle is contoured to allow firm grip and there is finger protector at end of handle closest to the blade. The knife has a protective sheath for when not in use.
PPE	Safety gloves
Adult : Student ratio	1 : 1 ratio
Transporting	Hold by handle at all times and when passing to others, pass with the handle pointing towards the other person. When not in use, place knife in protective sheath. Carry down by your side with the blade pointing downwards.
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance of others.
Body Stance	Adopt an upright kneeling position so that you are able to cut down towards the ground and away from the body. Never cut over your lap.
Method of Use	Wear a glove on the hand holding the wood but not on the hand holding the knife. Check you have enough space, adopt appropriate stable stance and work the blade away from the body and the hand supporting the wood. Cut on a firm surface if necessary such as a stump or log.
Checking	Check blade is intact, not damaged and not blunt. Check there is no damage to the handle.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use. Ensure blade is dry after use. Place in protective sheath.
Maintenance	Blade should be oiled to avoid corrosion. Blade may need sharpening periodically using a whetstone or sharpening stone to maintain effective cutting.
Storage	When not in use place back in protective sheath and placevflat on the ground on designated tool tarpaulin where it can be seen. Store in a strong bag/pouch away from reach of children and take care not to damage blade

Tool	Crook Knife 
Purpose	A tool with a hooked blade sharp on both sides used to carve out indentations such as the bowl of a spoon. The blade is fixed to a wooden handle.
Safety Equipment or Design Feature	Blunt edge part of blade closest to handle to use leverage if needed. Firm grip required on handle to avoid slipping
PPE	Safety gloves
Adult : Student ratio	1 : 1 ratio
Transporting	Hold by handle at all times and when passing to others, pass with the handle pointing towards the other person. Carry down by your side with the blade pointing downwards.
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance of others.
Body Stance	Adopt a comfortable position but work away from your body and not over your lap.
Method of Use	Use a rocking motion so that it cuts with both sides of the blade, use the crook knife to carve away wood to make a bowl in a spoon or other wood carving. Slice away slowly until the desired shape is achieved.
Checking	Check blade is intact, not damaged and not blunt. Check there is no damage to the handle.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use. Ensure blade is dry after use.
Maintenance	Wooden handle may be oiled with linseed oil to keep smooth. Blade should be oiled to avoid corrosion.
Storage	When not in use, leave flat on the ground on designated tool tarpaulin where it can be seen. Store in a strong bag/pouch and take care not to damage blade away from reach of children

Tool	Bow Saw 
Purpose	A metal framed saw in the shape of a bow with a long coarse blade tensioned between the two ends of the bow frame. Used for cutting branches and logs down to size.
Safety Equipment or Design Feature	Knuckle guard in place. Blade protector for when bow saw is not in use.
PPE	Safety gloves.
Adult : Student ratio	1 : 2 when using bow saw in pairs.
Transporting	Ensure blade is protected when transporting and when carrying, hold metal frame and keep bow saw horizontal to prevent dragging on the ground.
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance of others apart from those working with you when using the bow saw in pairs.
Body Stance	Adopt a comfortable kneeling position with knee closest to blade off the ground and other knee furthest away on the ground. Keep body in line with the other person in order to get straight cut. Keep gloved hand well way from cutting area.
Method of Use	For splitting logs, hold handle with ungloved hand and hold the top of the blade end with the gloved hand. Hold Bill Hook upright and the other person hits the top of blade with mallet to split the wood at 90 degrees
Checking	Check blade is intact, not damaged and not blunt. Check there is no damage to the handle.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use. Ensure blade is dry
Maintenance	Wooden handle may be oiled with linseed oil to keep smooth. Blade should be oiled to avoid corrosion.
Storage	When not in use, leave flat on the ground on designated tool tarpaulin where it can be seen, not stuck in a stump or wood block. Store in a strong bag/pouch away from reach of children and take care not to damage blade

Tool	Bill Hook 
Purpose	A traditional cutting tool used for cutting and splitting wood. The thick blade is straight near the handle but then curves strongly near the end. The blade is fixed to a wooden handle.
Safety Equipment or Design Feature	Firm grip required on handle to avoid slipping. Small finger guard close to edge of blade closest to handle to prevent fingers sliding onto blade.
PPE	Safety gloves
Adult : Student ratio	1 : 1 ratio
Transporting	Hold by handle at all times and when passing to others, pass with the handle pointing towards the other person. Carry down by your side with the blade pointing downwards.
Working Space	Work with at least an arm's length distance of others apart from those working with you. (when using with a mallet)
Body Stance	Establish a stable kneeling stance if using to split wood with a mallet. Keep at an arm's length with ungloved hand holding by handle and gloved hand holding blade end at the top
Method of Use	For splitting logs, hold handle with ungloved hand and hold the top of the blade end with the gloved hand. Hold Bill Hook upright and the other person hits the top of blade with mallet to split the wood at 90 degrees
Checking	Check blade is intact, not damaged and not blunt. Check there is no damage to the handle.
Cleaning	Wipe clean after use. Ensure blade is dry
Maintenance	Wooden handle may be oiled with linseed oil to keep smooth. Blade should be oiled to avoid corrosion.
Storage	When not in use, leave flat on the ground on designated tool tarpaulin where it can be seen, not stuck in a stump or wood block. Store in a strong bag/pouch away from reach of children and take care not to damage blade,

Section 6

Risk Assessments

